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31 March 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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25X1 [REDACTED] East and Central Africa; Syria; Bolivia.

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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: Increased anti-Americanism in I Corps and a Buddhist demonstration in Saigon today are keeping tensions at a high level.

A Buddhist commemorative ceremony in Saigon this morning attracted an orderly crowd of three to four thousand. Anti-American and antigovernment themes were featured on banners and in speeches by leaders of the meeting. Although [redacted]

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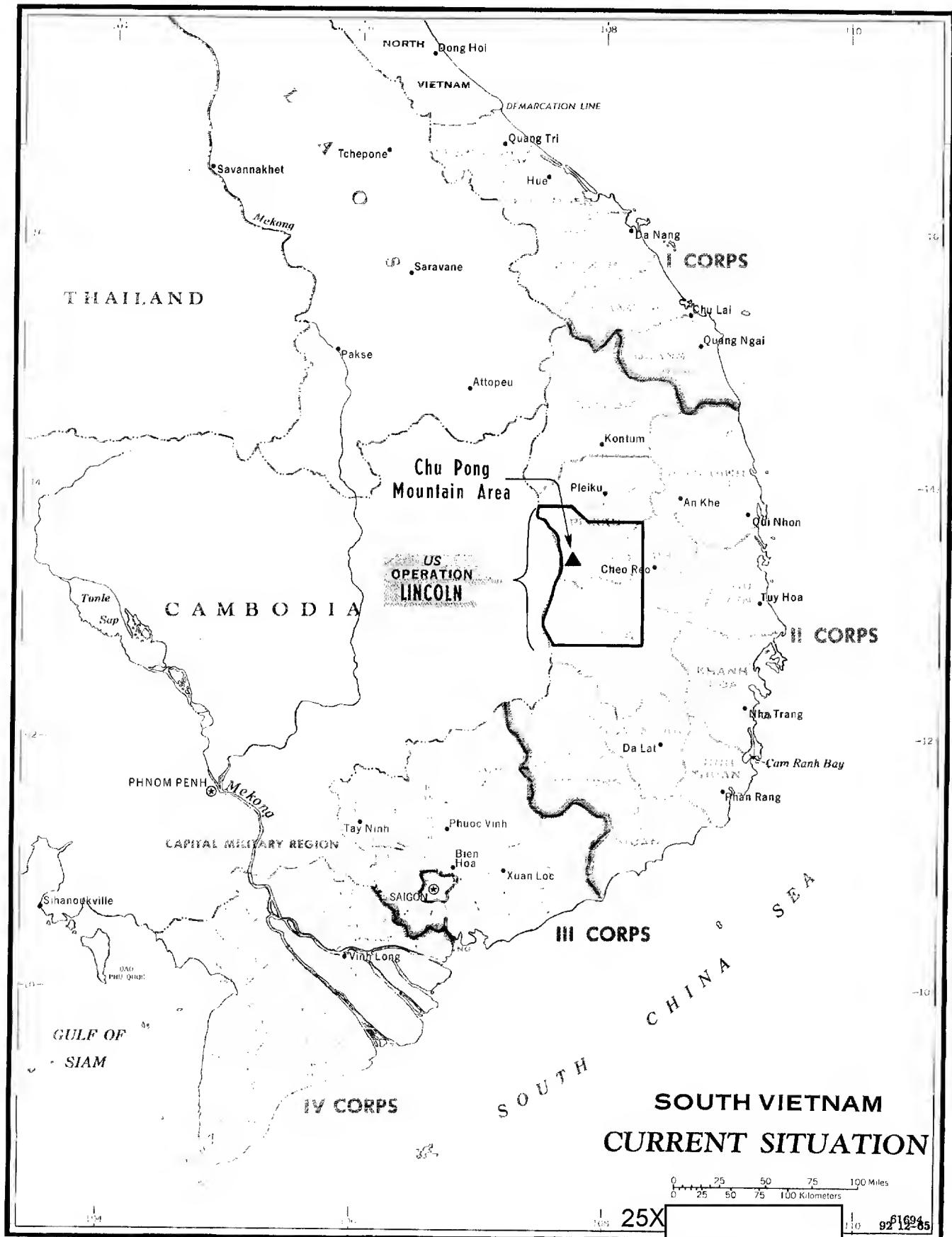
[redacted] Viet Cong agents might attempt to instigate violence and anti-American incidents during the ceremony, no incidents were reported.

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During an antigovernment demonstration of cyclo-drivers and truckers in Da Nang yesterday, a truck carrying US Marines intruded in the line of march. The Marines took security precautions when a crowd gathered, but there was no violence. Some 2,000 Vietnamese assembled in front of a US Marine billet in the city during the afternoon, and then dispersed when US officials refused to appear and offer apologies. The Da Nang radio later broadcast student demands for an apology within 48 hours, warning that student leaders could not otherwise be held responsible for American lives or property in the city.

Other radiobroadcasts in both Hue and Da Nang yesterday included strong criticisms of the US political position in Vietnam. An effective transportation strike was also carried out in Hue yesterday. Following the strike, about 400 national policemen staged a march in the city in support of the "struggle" movement and the Buddhist four-point program. There are numerous indications of other protest activities in I Corps in coming days.

(continued)



The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Reconnaissance elements of the US First Cavalry Division participating in Operation LINCOLN yesterday encountered strong enemy opposition in the Chu Pong Mountain area of southwestern Pleiku Province. One US company was withdrawn from the area after being surrounded and sustaining casualties of five killed and eight wounded. A second US company in the area reported casualties of four killed and 18 wounded resulting from enemy contact yesterday.

Reinforcements have been moved into the area, where sporadic contact continued this morning. Five helicopters were shot down by enemy fire during the operation, but three have since been recovered.

A Communist soldier captured yesterday--and subsequently killed in one of the helicopter crashes--claimed that there were 1,000 enemy troops in the vicinity. Although there have been no reports specifically identifying the enemy units thus far, this area was the scene of a major battle last November which involved the 32nd, 33rd, and 66th North Vietnamese regiments.

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Singapore: A new left-wing movement is developing which could cause difficulty for Lee Kuan Yew's government.

Pro-Communist labor and political leaders are planning to form a new political party to rival the opposition Barisan Socialist Party which has been torn by dissension. This party's chief theme has been the echoing of the Indonesian anti-Malaysian line. The new party would concentrate on fostering anti-US feeling and Chinese chauvinism and thus be immune to the charge of "Indonesian puppet" which Lee effectively used against the Barisan party.

Left-wing forces are now organizing an anti-US, pro-Peking propaganda campaign designed to culminate in a demonstration at the US Consulate General on May Day. Among other issues, they apparently plan to exploit the presence of American servicemen in Singapore under a recently negotiated rest and recreation program.

Lee has recently made moves to improve relations with the West in order to enhance prospects for economic assistance. In meeting this new left-wing challenge, however, he risks being maneuvered into what could be portrayed as an anti-China position. This could hurt his standing among the Chinese of Singapore who constitute about 75 percent of the population.

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East and Central Africa: The heads of government of the 11 east and central African states are meeting today in Nairobi to discuss regional and bilateral problems. There is no agreed agenda, but recent military coups elsewhere in Africa, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and regional economic cooperation are likely topics. While some African leaders have indicated that they would prefer to avoid the Rhodesian issue, the subject is bound to arise at the meeting.

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* Syria: Opposition elements may demonstrate against the month-old Damascus regime within the next few days.

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The current labor trouble in the northern center of Aleppo may also have political repercussions. New violence could provoke a move by military units, possibly by some which participated in last month's coup.

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* Bolivia: General Barrientos announced late yesterday that he will not run for president in elections scheduled for 3 July, and has asked the armed forces to "recommend a military candidate." Barrientos' decision may be merely a ploy to force the armed forces to give unqualified support to his candidacy. By proposing that military leaders select another candidate, Barrientos is in effect challenging them to come up with an acceptable alternative to himself--a daring gamble which could backfire.

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